

(b) A competitive area must be defined solely in terms of the agency's organizational unit(s) and geographical location, and it must include all employees within the competitive area so defined. A competitive area may consist of all or part of an agency. The minimum competitive area is a subdivision of the agency under separate administration within the local commuting area.

(c) When a competitive area will be in effect less than 90 days prior to the effective date of a reduction in force, a description of the competitive area shall be submitted to the OPM for approval in advance of the reduction in force. Descriptions of all competitive areas must be made readily available for review.

(d) Each agency shall establish a separate competitive area for each Inspector General activity established under authority of the Inspector General Act of 1978, Public Law 95–452, as amended, in which only employees of that office shall compete for retention under this part.

[51 FR 319 Jan. 3, 1986, as amended at 56 FR 65416, Dec. 17, 1991; 62 FR 62500, Nov. 24, 1997]

§ 351.403 Competitive level.

(a)(1) Each agency shall establish competitive levels consisting of all positions in a competitive area which are in the same grade (or occupational level) and classification series, and which are similar enough in duties, qualification requirements, pay schedules, and working conditions so that an agency may reassign the incumbent of one position to any of the other positions in the level without undue interruption.

(2) Competitive level determinations are based on each employee's official position, not the employee's personal qualifications.

(3) Sex may not be the basis for a competitive level determination, except for a position OPM designates that certification of eligibles by sex is justified.

(4) A probationary period required by subpart I of part 315 of this chapter for initial appointment to a supervisory or managerial position is not a basis for establishing a separate competitive level.

(b) Each agency shall establish separate competitive levels according to the following categories:

(1) *By service.* Separate levels shall be established for positions in the competitive service and in the excepted service.

(2) *By appointment authority.* Separate levels shall be established for excepted service positions filled under different appointment authorities.

(3) *By pay schedule.* Separate levels shall be established for positions under different pay schedules.

(4) *By work schedule.* Separate levels shall be established for positions filled on a full-time, part-time, intermittent, seasonal, or on-call basis. No distinction may be made among employees in the competitive level on the basis of the number of hours or weeks scheduled to be worked.

(5) *By trainee status.* Separate levels shall be established for positions filled by an employee in a formally designated trainee or developmental program having all of the characteristics covered in § 351.702(e)(1) through (e)(4) of this part.

(c) An agency may not establish a competitive level based solely upon:

(1) A difference in the number of hours or weeks scheduled to be worked by other-than-full-time employees who would otherwise be in the same competitive level;

(2) A requirement to work changing shifts;

(3) The grade promotion potential of the position; or

(4) A difference in the local wage areas in which wage grade positions are located.

[51 FR 319, Jan. 3, 1986, as amended at 60 FR 3062, Jan. 13, 1995; 62 FR 62500, Nov. 24, 1997]

§ 351.404 Retention register.

(a) When a competing employee is to be released from a competitive level under this part, the agency shall establish a separate retention register for that competitive level. The retention register is prepared from the current retention records of employees. Upon displacing another employee under this part, an employee retains the same status and tenure in the new position. Except for an employee on military duty with a restoration right, the agency

shall enter on the retention register, in the order of retention standing, the name of each competing employee who is:

- (1) In the competitive level;
- (2) Temporarily promoted from the competitive level by temporary or term promotion; or
- (3) Detailed from the competitive level under 5 U.S.C. 3341 or other appropriate authority.

(b)(1) The name of each employee serving under a time limited appointment or promotion to a position in a competitive level shall be entered on a list apart from the retention register for that competitive level, along with the expiration date of the action.

(2) The agency shall list, at the bottom of the list prepared under paragraph (b)(1) of this section, the name of each employee in the competitive level with a written decision of removal under part 432 or 752 of this chapter.

[51 FR 319, Jan. 3, 1986, as amended at 62 FR 62500, Nov. 24, 1997]

§ 351.405 Demoted employees.

An employee who has received a written decision under part 432 or 752 of this chapter to demote him or her competes under this part from the position to which he or she will be or has been demoted.

[62 FR 62500, Nov. 24, 1997]

Subpart E—Retention Standing

§ 351.501 Order of retention—competitive service.

(a) Competing employees shall be classified on a retention register on the basis of their tenure of employment, veteran preference, length of service, and performance in descending order as follows:

- (1) By tenure group I, group II, group III; and
- (2) Within each group by veteran preference subgroup AD, subgroup A, subgroup B; and
- (3) Within each subgroup by years of service as augmented by credit for performance under § 351.504, beginning with the earliest service date.

(b) Groups are defined as follows:

- (1) Group I includes each career employee who is not serving a proba-

tionary period. (A supervisory or managerial employee serving a probationary period required by subpart I of part 315 of this title is in group I if the employee is otherwise eligible to be included in this group.) The following employees are in group I as soon as the employee completes any required probationary period for initial appointment:

- (i) An employee for whom substantial evidence exists of eligibility to immediately acquire status and career tenure, and whose case is pending final resolution by OPM (including cases under Executive Order 10826 to correct certain administrative errors);

- (ii) An employee who acquires competitive status and satisfies the service requirement for career tenure when the employee's position is brought into the competitive service;

- (iii) An administrative law judge;

- (iv) An employee appointed under 5 U.S.C. 3104, which provides for the employment of specially qualified scientific or professional personnel, or a similar authority; and

- (v) An employee who acquires status under 5 U.S.C. 3304(c) on transfer to the competitive service from the legislative or judicial branches of the Federal Government.

(2) Group II includes each career-conditional employee, and each employee serving a probationary period under subpart H of part 315 of this chapter. (A supervisory or managerial employee serving a probationary period required by subpart I of part 315 of this title is in group II if the employee has not completed a probationary period under subpart H of part 315 of this title.) Group II also includes an employee when substantial evidence exists of the employee's eligibility to immediately acquire status and career-conditional tenure, and the employee's case is pending final resolution by OPM (including cases under Executive Order 10826 to correct certain administrative errors).

(3) Group III includes all employees serving under indefinite appointments, temporary appointments pending establishment of a register, status quo appointments, term appointments, and any other nonstatus nontemporary appointments which meet the definition